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WALTER TRINKAUS

*Robert W. Benson**

In my first year of teaching, I was anxious to learn from the experienced pros on the faculty, so one evening when I heard Walter Trinkaus's voice coming from the old Classroom A in the former building I stopped and listened. I stood in the corridor by the open door directly behind the podium from which professors lectured and took in Walter's knowing and witty dialogue with the students. Suddenly, his voice fell silent in mid-sentence. A moment later, he emerged through the door and we were nose-to-nose, both flustered and speechless. He reentered the classroom and boomed indignantly to the 100 students, "I thought I heard a noise in the corridor and guess what I found? Professor Benson was out there spying on me!"

I was eventually able to explain to Walter that I was not spying but rather attempting to learn a master's tricks. He nevertheless delighted in telling the story to others whenever I was around for the next couple of years, and in my embarrassment, I was nevertheless pleased to have given him yet another story. He was a man of endless stories, a few tragic, many funny, most colorful, and all apparently true. You could not get far into a conversation with him before he would say, "That reminds me of the time . . .," and off he would go exercising his high skill as a raconteur.

His stories served him well in the classroom, but it was his love of ideas and his moral engagement that made him temperamentally well-suited for teaching. His values and mine were at odds on some fundamental issues, but it was always easy to reconcile with Walter because he brought such good will and genuine intellectual delight to the dialogue. His delight often focused on language, a focus that he told me was reinforced by an early job he held as a linotype operator for a newspaper. When I was teaching courses in legislative drafting and legal writing, Walter was always sending me photocopies of paragraphs from court decisions in which some pompous judge had misused the word "eleemosynary" or had strung 150 words of legalese together in a single incomprehensible sentence. I recall the glee with which Walter told of the sign he had seen on a low bridge over a

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highway: "Impaired Vertical Clearance." By the time a truck driver had figured it out, Walter laughed, it would be too late.

Loyola was a finer place for the presence of this humanist scholar. He graced our hallways for some years after he retired, walking to campus from his Bunker Hill apartment, passionately working on legal projects, and always ready to regale us with another story.